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CIA chief assails Congress

Too many members
hold secrets, he says

WASHINGTON — Leveling his strongest criticism ever at congress, CIA Director William E. Colby said yesterday that the number of legislators given access to intelligence secrets should be sharply restricted.

"The fewer members . . . the better," Colby told the Senate Government Operations Committee. He urged that only one committee be told of oversea covert operations and said that there should be criminal penalties for staff members who reveal secrets.

"The system won't work," Colby said of the present procedure, in which eight congressional committees are briefed on covert operations. "Every one if the new projects that were subjected to his process has leaked into the public domain," he added, in apparent reference to recent news reports about CIA operations in Angola and Italy.

"I believe it is essential to repeal that procedure and replace it by another which will include provisions for adequate secrecy," said Colby, who is about to leave the CIA post.

Of the other side of the Capitol, the House Select Committee on Intelligence approved 9-4 the final report on its lengthy investigation of intelligence agencies after deleting phrases that the agencies said could endanger agents or embarrass the United States.

But the committee's senior Republican, Rep. Robert McClory of Illinois, said the report still disclosed too many secrets and he said he was considering asking for a secret session of the full House to block their release.

Chairman Otis G. Pike (D., N.Y.), agreed that President Ford and the intelligence agencies probably would not be satisfied with the report, even though many of their specific objections had been solved by deleting secrets.

Pike said the report probably would not be published until early next month.

In criticizing Congress for disclosing intelligence secrets, Colby flatly denied recent speculation by Sen. Clifford Case (R., N.J.) that the CIA had leaked information in an effort to discredit the congressional committees.

Colby, who is expected to be re-

placed by former Republican Party Chairman George Bush after a Senate confirmation vote scheduled for next week, seemed to reserve his harshest criticism for the House.

In an obvious reference to the House intelligence committee, Colby labeled as "absurd" a "situation in which a committee agrees not to release individual reports of secret activities but then proposes to publish them in its final report."

Making what is expected to be his last appearance on Capitol Hill as CIA director, Colby also complained that some congressmen are told about covert operations but then claim "that they never heard of them when they came to public attention."

He said that a chairman of one of the CIA supervisory committees "once indicated on the floor of the Senate that he had no inkling of one of our operations, although he had approved the specific appropriations necessary to continue it."

Another witness before the Senate committee, former national security adviser McGeorge Bundy, took issue with Colby, saying it was wrong to attribute the disclosure of the Angola operation to the large number of committees privy to CIA secrets.

The real cause, Bundy said, "is the breakdown of the broad political consensus which made it possible 10 or 15 years ago for the CIA to conduct such large operations in the face of widespread knowledge of their existence without any admission or explanation from the U. S. government."

Bundy, who served under President John F. Kennedy, cited as an example U. S. covert operations against Cuba during the early 1950s. "The existence of his effort was widely known and . . . in the climate of the time the major media and the Congress made no effort whatever to expose it in detail."